United Nations ST/IC/1998/61

Secretariat

9 September 1998

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **1999 competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories**

1. The purpose of the present information circular is to invite applications from staff members in the General Service and related categories of the Secretariat who wish to take the 1999 competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category, in accordance with the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/1998/8 of 13 August 1998.

2. The 1999 competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category is scheduled to be held from 1 to 6 February 1999 (written component) and in June/July 1999 (oral component). The final schedule will be announced in an addendum to the present information circular and in the convocation letters which will be sent to each candidate.

Selection of posts

3. The Office of Human Resources Management, taking into account information provided by departments and offices at all duty stations, has established projections of P-2 level posts subject to geographical distribution that will be or are expected to become available in the 12 months preceding placement. The total number of posts to be selected for the 1999 competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category will be approximately 30 per cent of the number of P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution that became available during the previous calendar year.

4. On the basis of these projections, the Central Examinations Board has selected the following occupational groups for which the examination is to be held:

(a) **Administration**, which covers work such as that of administrative officers, personnel officers, budget officers and project management officers;

(b) **Economics**, which covers work such as that of economic affairs officers, transnational affairs officers and international development officers;

(c) **Library**, which covers work such as that of librarians and records management officers;

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 1999.

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(d) **Public Information**, which covers work such as that of information officers and press officers;

(e) **Social Affairs**, which covers work such as that of social welfare and humanitarian affairs officers.

Eligibility

5. A staff member serving in the General Service and related categories, including the Field Service category up to and including the FS-5 level, may apply to take the competitive examination in a particular occupational group, provided that he or she:

(a) Has a minimum of five years' continuous service in the Secretariat by 31 December 1998, excluding any service in separately administered funds or programmes, except as otherwise provided in paragraph 6 below;

(b) Has a satisfactory record of performance;

(c) Holds a United Nations letter of appointment valid at least until 31 August 1999;

(d) Meets the minimum eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 8 to 12 of the present information circular.

6. Short breaks in service may be allowed at the discretion of the Central Examinations Board. Staff members who had previously served continuously for at least five years with the Secretariat, had resigned and, by 31 December of 1998, would have served continuously for at least three years since their reappointment will also be considered eligible, provided that they meet the other requirements.

7. National professional officers who are recruited locally to perform functions at the professional level are not considered eligible to take the competitive examination since they are not employed in the General Service and related categories.

Minimum eligibility criteria

8. Staff members are invited to apply for one of the occupational groups in which the examination is to be held in 1999. The minimum eligibility criteria is a first-level university degree, equivalent to a bachelor's degree, broadly related to the occupational group for which the candidate has applied. Staff members who have a degree or degrees broadly related to two occupational groups offered in 1999 may apply to take the examination in each of these two occupational groups.

9. Staff members who have served in the Secretariat for at least five years by 31 December 1989 will be allowed to take the examination in any one of the occupational groups in which the examination is held in 1999, upon providing evidence of post-secondary academic qualifications. Should such staff members hold a first-level university degree or degrees broadly related to the occupational groups offered in 1999, they may apply to take the examination in a second occupational group to which their degree is broadly related.

10. In addition to the minimum eligibility criteria stipulated above, those staff members who have sat for previous competitive examinations must have achieved a mark of at least 30 per cent in the overall written portion of the previous examination in the occupational group(s) for which they are now applying. In cases where the staff member did not obtain 30 per cent, the staff member should submit to the Central Examinations Board tangible proof, in detail, of his or her preparation for the new examination (e.g., official transcripts demonstrating relevant university-level courses successfully completed, detailed summary of relevant materials used for study, detailed description of the nature and duration of

relevant field work). Failure to submit such evidence will result in the staff member's ineligibility to sit for the upcoming examination.

11. The Central Examinations Board will determine the eligibility of all applicants in consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management. Staff members shall provide relevant documents, as required, as evidence in support of their meeting the minimum eligibility criteria described in this section and the eligibility requirements listed in paragraph 5 above.

12. Staff members who have been found ineligible by the Central Examinations Board to sit for the examination will be informed of the reason for that decision. Staff members who have cause to believe that they have been unfairly excluded from participating in the examination may appeal to the Board for review. Such appeals must be received by the Board at Headquarters within 10 working days of the receipt of notification of rejection. In order to meet this deadline, candidates serving at offices away from Headquarters must submit their appeal to the Chairperson of the Central Examinations Board by telegram or fax.

Applications

13. Staff members who wish to submit an application should complete the application form annexed to the present information circular and submit it with all required documentation to the Central Examinations Board by 31 October 1998. The staff member's most recent performance report must also be submitted with the application.

Format and substance of the examination

A. Written examination

14. The written examination accounts for 80 per cent of the total number of points available for each occupational group and consists of two parts: a general paper (four hours) and a specialized paper (four hours) related to the occupational group concerned. An examination booklet will be distributed to the candidates at the beginning of each part of the written examination. The examinations must be written with black pen in the designated parts of each booklet. The use of a non-programmable calculator is permitted in all parts of the examination.

15. Part I, the general paper, consists of three sections with a total coefficient of 30 per cent:

(a) Section 1 will test the candidate's ability to analyse a problem. The section consists of a text and questions based on the text. The time recommended for section 1 is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination;

(b) Section 2 consists of a text of a speech or a report. Candidates will be asked to summarize the text, reducing it to approximately one third of its length. The summary will be evaluated for comprehension, accuracy and clarity of thought. The time recommended for section 2 is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination;

(c) Section 3 tests the candidate's knowledge of international relations. Candidates may choose to answer any 10 among 12 questions offered. The time recommended for section 3 is 1 hour and 20 minutes and it has a coefficient of 10 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination.

16. Part II, the specialized paper, which tests the candidate's substantive knowledge of the occupational group concerned, normally consists of 3 essay-type exercises and 10 short-answer type questions. All essays and questions are mandatory. The total time recommended for part II is 4 hours and it has a coefficient of 50 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination.

17. As stated in ST/AI/1998/8, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/235 D of 21 December 1982, candidates participating in the examination shall be permitted to take the examination in any of the working languages of the regional commissions, with due regard to the requisite proficiency in one of the working languages of the Secretariat. In order to demonstrate such proficiency, all candidates will have to take the drafting section (section 2) of the general paper in either English or French. Alternatively, candidates may elect to take the entire written examination (parts I and II) in a working language of a regional commission other than English or French and to sit for a special language test in either English or French. This test consists of two parts covering, respectively, reading and writing abilities. The duration of the test is 2 hours and 30 minutes. Candidates who have not demonstrated proficiency in one of the working languages of the Secretariat (English or French) in the special language test or in the drafting test will be considered as not having met the standard required in the examination.

18. The exact time of the examination will be adjusted for each examination centre, taking into account the various time zones, and will be communicated to each candidate. Candidates should arrive at the examination room in each centre at least half an hour in advance of the scheduled starting time and have with them a United Nations identification document, their convocation letter and black pens.

19. The written examination for a given occupational group will be administered simultaneously at all duty stations. It will be scheduled so as to permit candidates who have applied and have been accepted for two occupational groups to complete the required papers. Staff members who have to sit for the examinations outside established working hours will be granted compensatory time off.

B. Oral examination

20. Candidates may be convoked for an oral examination in accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/1998/8. The number of candidates convoked for the oral part of the examination will normally be three times the number of posts available in that occupational group. More or fewer candidates may be convoked if the Central Examinations Board considers it to be warranted. Candidates serving at duty stations away from Headquarters will take this part of the examination either in New York or at another location, depending on circumstances. At locations away from Headquarters, the oral examination will be conducted by a board consisting of at least three members of the relevant board of examiners, including an ex officio member.

21. Prior to the oral examination, candidates convoked for that part of the examination will receive a list from the Office of Human Resources Management, approved by the Board, of all the posts available in the relevant occupational group and will be requested to indicate, in order of preference, those posts for which they wish to be considered. In addition to the list of posts, candidates will also receive a description of the functions for those posts. An expression of preference by a candidate for a particular post at a given duty station indicates the staff member's readiness to serve in that post at the duty station where it is located, if successful in the examination. The oral examination will not be held before the list of posts is available for distribution to the candidates concerned.

22. The oral examination will consist of two separate exercises: an oral presentation and a group exercise. The oral examination will constitute 20 per cent of the marks of the examination process. The oral presentation, designed to evaluate the candidate's ability to communicate and convey his or her views in a clear, understandable and concise way, will account for 8 per cent of the points assigned to the examination, and the group exercise will account for 12 per cent of those points. The four performance dimensions measured by the group exercise, i.e., initiative, adaptability, negotiating skills and potential for leadership, will each account for 3 per cent of the marks assigned to the examination.

23. Candidates may make the individual oral presentation in English, French or in one of the official languages of the regional commissions other than English or French. In the group exercise, candidates must converse in either English or French. Language will be taken into consideration when constituting groups for the group exercise.

Oral presentation

24. For all occupational groups, the standardized format of the oral presentation will include a 10-minute presentation of a general nature on a topic broadly related to the occupational group concerned. Each candidate will draw two topics at random from a selection prepared in advance and will choose one of the topics. The candidate will then have 15 minutes to prepare an oral presentation on the selected topic. Following the presentation, the Board of Examiners will have an opportunity to ask three questions for clarification or amplification of any of the points made by the candidate. After the presentation and related questions, the Board will ask five other questions of a general nature, also broadly related to the occupation, and two questions for clarification or amplification of any points made during the five additional questions.

25. The presentation and responses to questions of the oral presentation will be evaluated in accordance with a rating scale designed to assess the candidate's ability to comprehend topics and questions, to communicate with others and to present and illustrate with examples his or her views in a clear, logical and understandable way. In order to ensure consistency, the marking will be done separately by each member of the Board immediately after each oral presentation and without relation to the grading of the written examination.

Group exercise

26. The group exercise is a leaderless group, non-assigned role exercise. As designed for the oral examination, it will measure the performance dimensions of initiative, adaptability, negotiating skills and potential for leadership. Candidates will be assigned to groups ranging in size from three to six members. Groups may be constituted of candidates drawn from one or several occupational groups.

27. The group exercise is a problem-solving exercise in which a scenario describing a series of problems is presented to the group. The group is allowed a specified length of time to analyse and discuss the problems. The members must arrive at a solution to each problem presented in the exercise as a group, through group discussion. Once solutions have been reached, depending upon the specific requirements of the exercise, a presentation/discussion/report will be generated for presentation to the board members.

28. If a candidate is convoked to the oral examination for two occupational groups, scores obtained in the group exercise portion of the oral examination will be applied to both occupational groups.

29. Candidates participating in the group exercise will be evaluated by a special board consisting of members who have received training in the group exercise methodology. The

training will focus on teaching the members to identify, observe, assess, rate and record specific behaviours related to the above-mentioned performance dimensions.

30. During the group exercise, the board members will observe each group member's behaviour, relative to the performance dimensions, and take notes on each candidate's behaviour.

31. Upon completion of the exercise, the board members will rate, on predetermined scales, each candidate's behaviour according to the appropriate performance dimensions. The board members will discuss their ratings and, where discrepancies in rating occur, will reconcile ratings. After reconciliation takes place, a total score will be calculated on the basis of the reconciled ratings.

Central Examinations Board

32. The Central Examinations Board is composed of five members appointed by the Secretary-General: a chairperson selected from among staff serving at Headquarters, with the concurrence of the representatives of the staff; two members nominated by the representatives of the staff, one of whom will be from a duty station away from Headquarters; and two members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, one of whom will be from a third duty station. The membership of the Board for the eighteenth round of the competitive examination will remain in office until the Board is reconstituted for the nineteenth round of the examination. The Board will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and a secretary. The Board will oversee the conduct of the examination as provided in section 8 of ST/AI/1998/8.

33. Staff members who have complaints with respect to the procedures and arrangements for the examination should contact the Central Examinations Board within 10 working days of the event that gave rise to the complaint. The established practice of the Board is to review such complaints within a reasonable period after receipt of such complaint.

Specialized boards of examiners

34. A specialized board of examiners will be established for each occupational group selected for the examination. An additional board of examiners will be established to mark the general paper. Specialized boards will normally be composed of staff members of the Secretariat; however, staff members of the specialized agencies or outside experts may also be employed in agreement between representatives of the Secretary-General and representatives of the staff. Each specialized board will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will consist of a chairperson elected by the members of the specialized board, normally at least two members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and an equal number of members nominated by the representatives of the staff. Each specialized board will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. Under the overall responsibility of the Central Examinations Board, specialized boards will mark the written examination papers and conduct oral examinations as provided in section 9 of ST/AI/1998/8.

Examination and Tests Section

35. In accordance with section 6.5 of Secretary-General's bulletin of 1 June 1998, entitled "Organization of the Office of Human Resources Management", (ST/SGB/1998/12) and section 10 of ST/AI/1998/8, Examinations and Tests Section, the Office of Human Resources Management has administrative responsibility for conducting the examination.

Informing candidates of results

36. The Examinations and Tests Section will, upon completion of the examination, communicate in writing to all candidates their ranking achieved in each section of the written examination as well as whether they have achieved a mark of 30 per cent or higher in the overall written part of the examination. Those candidates who have taken the oral examination will also be given the ranking in that part of the examination.

37. The candidates for each occupational group will be ranked on the basis of their combined scores in the written and oral parts of the examination. Taking into account paragraph 2 of the bulletin of the Secretary-General of 29 August 1979, ST/SGB/173, which stated that the competitive examination was to provide eligible staff members with an opportunity to compete for selected posts, and considering the level of difficulty of the examination, the specialized boards will make recommendations as to the level above which the candidates will be considered to be qualified to perform at the Junior Professional level. The final ranking of the candidates by occupational groups will be established by the Central Examinations Board on the basis of these recommendations. The recommendations concerning the qualification of candidates to perform at the Junior Professional level and the final ranking will be carried out confidentially with full respect for anonymity.

Promotion of successful candidates

38. The Central Examinations Board will make the final recommendations to the Secretary-General with regard to the assignment of successful candidates. When approved by the Secretary-General, the recommendations of the Board will be implemented.

39. After the Secretary-General's approval of the Board's recommendations, no additional posts will be considered for placement of successful candidates from that year's examination.

40. Successful candidates will be promoted against the posts selected for the examination. The Office of Human Resources Management, in cooperation with the Board, will be responsible for the assignment of successful candidates to posts in the occupational groups in which they have succeeded, after taking into account, in order of priority, the ranking of the candidates in the examinations and the stated preferences of the candidates. In the event that, within an occupational group, there is an unused post or posts because there were insufficient number of successful candidates meeting the requirements to perform at the Junior Professional level, the unused quota would be allocated to the occupational group that has the largest number of unplaced successful candidates, up to the limit of available posts in that occupational group. Should there be two or more occupational groups with the same number of unplaced successful candidates, the unused quota would then be allocated to that occupational group with the smallest number of candidates who have been placed.

41. Successful candidates will normally be expected to serve at least three years in their new post. Candidates who do not wish to be assigned to the post or posts available to them relinquish, *ipso facto*, their claim to promotion under the competitive examination and consequently the next ranked unplaced successful candidate who has been certified as having met the minimum professional standard for promotion will be offered the post after confirmation by the Board. If a candidate who is promoted separates from the Organization within six months of the implementation of the promotion, the next ranked unplaced successful candidate who has been certified as having met the minimum professional standard for promotion will be offered the post after confirmation by the Board.

42. All successful candidates will be recommended for promotion to the P-2 level. The salary step at the P-2 level will be determined on the basis of applicable staff rule.

43. The names of the successful candidates placed will appear in the information circular on appointments, promotions and other staff changes, which is issued on a regular basis. The effective date of promotion of the successful candidates will be the first day of the month in which they assume the functions of the post for which they have been selected.

44. The present information circular supersedes information circular ST/IC/1997/84 of 10 December 1997.

Annex

Application for the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

(United Nations Secretariat staff members only)

All correspondence with candidates will be conducted on the basis of the information given. It is the responsibility of the candidates to inform the Secretary of the Central Examinations Board of any changes in the information indicated in the application form.

N.B. The deadline for receipt of applications by the Central Examinations Board (United Nations Headquarters) is 31 October 1998.

Section I. Personal data

Please type or print legibly.

Last name (family name): ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

First name: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Date of birth: Day ☐☐ Month ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

Sex: F ☐ M ☐ Index No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐ [a]

Nationality: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Category: ☐☐ Present level: ☐☐

Date of entry in United Nations Secretariat: Day ☐☐ Month ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

Type of appointment: Fixed term ☐ Probationary ☐ Permanent ☐

Expiration or review date: Day ☐☐ Month ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

Main language (Mother tongue): ☐

Please check below the occupational group (or two occupational groups, if applicable) for which you wish to take the examination.

Administration _____ Economics _____ Library _____

Public Information _____ Social Affairs _____

Date of latest performance evaluation report (PER/PAS): Day ☐☐ Month ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐ [b]

Please submit a copy of your latest performance evaluation report with your application.

Duty station: _____

Organizational unit:[c] _____

Department/Office: _____
(write in full)

Room No.: _____ Telephone No.: _____

Home telephone No.: _____ (Because of time differences at duty stations away from Headquarters, candidates are requested to indicate their home telephone number in order to facilitate communications of an urgent nature.)

1. Have you applied to take previous G-to-P examination(s)? Yes ☐ No ☐

2. Were you convoked to sit for previous G-to-P examinations? No ☐

If yes, when? 1980 ☐ 1982 ☐ 1983 ☐ 1984 ☐ 1985 ☐ 1986 ☐ 1987 ☐ 1988 ☐
1989 ☐ 1990 ☐ 1991 ☐ 1992 ☐ 1993 ☐ 1994 ☐ 1995/96 ☐ 1997 ☐
1998 ☐

Which occupational group(s)? _____

If yes, did you actually take the examination? No ☐

Yes, in: 1980 ☐ 1982 ☐ 1983 ☐ 1984 ☐ 1985 ☐ 1986 ☐ 1987 ☐ 1988 ☐
1989 ☐ 1990 ☐ 1991 ☐ 1992 ☐ 1993 ☐ 1994 ☐ 1995/96 ☐ 1997 ☐
1998 ☐

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[a] Usually appears on your monthly salary statement or grounds pass; if not, please contact your Personnel Officer to obtain your number.

[b] Must be within the normal reporting period of three years.

[c] Please select from this list: Headquarters, ECA, ECE, UNDRO, HR, UNOG, UNCTAD, UNOV, UNIC, ESCAP, ECLAC, ESCWA, UNTSO, UNMOGIP, UNIFIL, UNCHS or other (specify).

Section II. Education

List your qualifications at the secondary and post-secondary levels, indicating the certificate, diploma or degree received. All candidates, including those who have applied for or taken a previous G-to-P examination must forward a copy of their university degree or diploma, including, when available, a copy of an up-to-date university transcript.

Written proof of post-secondary education must be attached to this application. (Send photocopies, do not send any originals.) Failure to provide proof will mean that the application will be disregarded.

Certificate, diploma or degree Exact title in original language. For work towards a degree, please list number of credits	**Institution** Name Place Country	**Period of study** Month Year	**Description of courses or main field of study**
Secondary studies		From: 19 To: 19	
Post-secondary studies		From: 19 To: 19	
		From: 19 To: 19	
		From: 19 To: 19	
		From: 19 To: 19	

If you need more space, attach additional pages.

Section III. Languages

If you have successfully passed a United Nations language proficiency examination (LPE), please indicate the year you obtained the certificate. If you did not pass the LPE, indicate your level of ability below, using the following code letters: A = fluently, B = quite easily, C = not easily.

If you are or have been enrolled in any language courses, please indicate the institution and the highest level completed or the diploma obtained.

Language	LPE year	Read	Understand	Speak	Write	Institution and diploma (period(s) of study)

Section IV. Occupation(s) for which you are applying

Name _____

Office _____

Room No. _____

Duty station _____

Country _____

Sex: F ☐ M ☐

Index No. _____

Please check below the occupational group(s) for which you wish to take the examination. You may apply for no more than two occupational groups.

Administration ____ Economics ____ Library ____

Public Information ____ Social Affairs ____

Indicate the language in which you wish to take the examination:

(a) Written part, general paper, sections 1 and 3 ☐

(b) Written part, general paper, section 2 ☐

(c) Written part, specialized paper ☐

(d) If you plan to take the portion of the oral examination dealing with ability to communicate in a working language of one of the regional commissions other than in English or French, please indicate the language ☐

(Write language in full for each part of the examination in appropriate boxes.)

If you plan to write section 2 in a working language of a regional commission, other than English or French, please indicate your choice of language for the special language test: **English** ____ **French** ____

Main language (Mother tongue) ☐

Highest educational level:

High school ☐ Post-secondary ☐ BA ☐ MA ☐ Other (Ph.D., etc.) ☐

Section V. Certification of accuracy of information provided

Fully completed applications, together with proof of post-secondary education and of language ability (if you did not pass the language proficiency examination or are not enrolled in a United Nations course), must be received by the Central Examinations Board no later than **31 October 1998** in a sealed envelope marked confidential, addressed to:

Central Examinations Board secretariat
Office of Human Resources Management – Room S-2590A
United Nations Secretariat
New York, N.Y. 10017, USA
Fax: (212) 963-3683

For duty stations outside New York, please fax whenever possible. Where fax machine is not available, please use the United Nations pouch.

Important: Applications that are incomplete or do not include essential information may be rejected.

I certify that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge and I understand that any misrepresentation would lead to my elimination from the examination and to possible disciplinary action. I further understand that it is my responsibility to report immediately any changes in the above information to the Central Examinations Board.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

List of enclosures: _____

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_____

_____

☐ Most recent performance evaluation report

Competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories

The information below will be used as your mailing label; please print or write legibly. You are responsible for immediately reporting to the Secretary of the Central Examinations Board any subsequent changes in duty station, either prior to or during the examination process.

Central Examinations Board stamp

Name _____

Office _____

Room No. _____

Duty station _____

Country _____

This portion will be returned to you as an acknowledgement of receipt of your application.